

Indiana State Department of Health Wellness Plan

Rationale:

Health care costs are rising at an alarming rate, and chronic conditions like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease are affecting greater numbers of Hoosiers. At the same time, many people struggle to quit smoking, maintain a healthy diet, get adequate physical activity, and minimize stress in today's fast-paced society. Adults spend many hours each week at work, making the worksite an important environment in which to advocate for improved health and wellness.

Comprehensive worksite wellness programs benefit employees as well as the employer.

Potential benefits to individuals:

- Opportunities to learn about health issues and assess their own health status
- Increased opportunities to make healthy choices
- A more enjoyable work environment
- Improved levels of physical, mental, and social health
- Lower risk of developing certain health problems and/or support in managing and minimizing current health conditions

Potential benefits to employers:

- Lower insurance rates
- Decreased absenteeism
- Fewer on-the-job injuries
- Increased job satisfaction, morale, and productivity
- A more positive workforce

State government is the largest single employer and health coverage purchaser in many states; therefore, many initiatives are underway across the nation to improve the health and wellness of state employees. This document serves as a plan for promoting and improving the health of employees, contractors, student interns, volunteers, and visitors at the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH). As the state health agency, it is important to model healthy practices in the workplace that can serve as a model for other state agencies, as well as those in the private sector. The use and modification of this document by state agencies and other worksites to create their own wellness program is highly encouraged.

Goal:

ISDH Mission Statement:

“The Indiana State Department of Health supports Indiana's economic prosperity and quality of life by promoting, protecting, and providing for the health of Hoosiers in their communities.”

In keeping with the agency's mission, the ISDH strives to offer a healthy working environment and opportunities to promote wellness. An ISDH Wellness Council has been formed and is

made up of a diverse group of ISDH employees, contractors, and student interns with various wellness related interests and skills. The goals of the Wellness Council include:

1. Creating the ISDH Wellness Plan and revising it as needed
2. Offering a broad range of health promotion opportunities
3. Marketing all health promotion activities

In order to achieve a comprehensive approach to wellness, the ISDH Wellness Plan comprises eight core components: Health Education; Health Services/Screenings; Physical Activity; Nutrition; Mental Health & Social Services; Healthy Work Environment; Family & Community Involvement; and Marketing, Incentives, and Employee Input. Sustaining and initiating activities in each of these areas creates a broad-based wellness plan for the agency.

The ISDH aims to provide a comprehensive range of services, opportunities, and encouragement to promote overall health inside and outside the organization. In order to ensure broad participation throughout the agency and to accommodate various work schedules, the length, time, and format of wellness activities will be varied. While some wellness initiatives may be restricted to ISDH employees, a variety of programs and activities will be accessible to contractors, student interns, volunteers, and visitors as well as employees working at off-site locations.

A variety of new and existing methods of marketing wellness activities throughout the agency will be used in an effort to reach the largest number of people. Marketing efforts will also be used to motivate individuals to improve their health and wellness, and is thereby a crucial factor in making the ISDH Wellness Plan a successful endeavor.

Wellness Components

1. Health Education

Knowledge about health and wellness is the cornerstone to making healthy decisions. The agency offers opportunities to learn about various health issues using an array of teaching methods and formats.

Initiatives currently in place or under development:

- Brown bag lunches are held periodically, during which health experts from within and outside the agency share information about issues like heart disease, school health, safety, nutrition, etc.
- Posters and health exhibits on various health issues are often displayed in the ISDH lobby
- ISDH news releases are emailed to all employees and contractors
- Information on health issues is often shared in The Express (the ISDH newsletter) as well as the Epidemiology Newsletter, which is emailed to all ISDH staff and community partners and is available on the ISDH Web site
- The ISDH Safety Committee has a Safety Education & Training subcommittee, which presents trainings on safety issues 2-3 times a year

- The Chronic Disease Self Management course is offered during work hours to those with chronic conditions, like diabetes and asthma, and guides individuals in developing ways to best manage their condition
- National videoconferences and Web conferences on a variety of health issues are made available in the 2 North building with the schedule of opportunities listed on the ISDH Web site
- An in-house wellness library was created containing books, CDs, videos, and other forms of media with information on various health topics
- Health education opportunities are provided in a variety of formats, at different times, and of varying lengths to accommodate different schedules
- Daily nutrition tips were posted on the Intranet and Internet to promote National Nutrition Month
- “The Wellness Corner” is now an established section of The Express

Proposed Initiatives:

- Post signs with health facts in common areas
- Include additional weekly or monthly health tips on the Intranet and Internet
- Include an “Ask the Dietitian” or “Ask the Doctor” section in The Express
- Have a “Wellness Corner” on each floor consisting of a bulletin board or display area with health information and encourage employees to visit other floors
- Host a competition on the Wellness Corners between the floors with judging and prizes awarded by the Wellness Council
- Make other state agencies aware of The Express

2. Health Services/Screenings

Health screenings are necessary to monitor health status and identify problems before they become serious so that further medical care can be obtained. Basic health services and screenings are offered by trained health professionals to allow individuals to assess their health status in a variety of areas.

Initiatives currently in place or under development:

- Bone density screenings have been provided to employees and contractors by the ISDH Office of Women’s Health
- Low cost flu shots are offered to employees and contractors
- Regular blood drives allow participants to get results on cholesterol levels
- Smoking cessation classes are offered to those who want help quitting
- Numerous screenings and health information are offered free of charge at the ISDH sponsored Black and Minority Health Fair as part of Black Expo Summer Celebration
- Individuals who are interested in joining Weight Watchers have been directed to Weight Watchers groups in the downtown area they could join

Proposed Initiatives:

- Offer men’s health screenings like PSAs to check for prostate cancer

- Offer confidential depression screening by mental health professionals
- Provide online resources to calculate Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Collect and distribute referral information on obtaining additional health screenings for low or no cost
- Work with blood drive sponsors to provide more specific cholesterol results to donors (HDL and LDL levels)

3. Physical Activity

Physical activity is a key element in weight management, disease prevention, self-esteem, and mental health. The goal is not simply weight loss or rigorous exercise, but to assist in making physical activity part of daily life. Opportunities for regular, moderate physical activity are incorporated into the work week and accommodate individuals of varying fitness levels. Motivational techniques to encourage physical activity are apparent throughout the agency.

Initiatives currently in place or under development:

- Signs are posted to encourage people to take the stairs instead of the elevators
- A short walk around downtown at noon each Thursday is lead by various ISDH staff at 2 North. As an incentive for participating, each walker is entered into a drawing to win a healthy breakfast with State Health Commissioner, Judy Monroe, MD
- State employees can receive discounts at fitness centers, including the National Institute for Fitness and Sport and Winner's Edge Gym
- Regular fitness sessions are held allowing individuals to do yoga, pilates, stretching, aerobics, etc. to a fitness video or with a live instructor, when available.
- The ISDH has a softball team open to all employees and the team competes against teams from other State agencies
- The ISDH and IDEM have a bowling league open to all employees.
- The agency supports national Bike to Work Day by encouraging employees to participate and offering bike storage
- Lockers and shower facilities are available in the restrooms on the lower level at 2 North
- Monthly opportunities to participate in a group ice skating outing are offered

Proposed Initiatives:

- Hold agency walks more than once a week, possibly lead by different program areas
- Encourage more people to walk to the parking lot by forming walking groups and times
- When appropriate, allow meetings to take place while walking inside or outside
- Advertise community walks/runs and provide incentives for participation
- Encourage "Brain Breaks" that offer suggestions on adding brief periods of physical activity or stress reducing activities into the work day and during long meetings
- Promote exercise buddies, possibly by using The Fitness Challenge board game.
- Change the "Take the Stairs" signs often so people do not become desensitized to them and provide better directions to the staircases

- Provide map of government tunnels to promote walking during bad weather

4. Nutrition

Proper nutrition is a vital component of overall wellness. Adults spend many hours each day at work and eat many of their meals and snacks away from home. In order to make healthy choices, a variety of nutritious foods must be readily available, competitively priced, and adequately marketed.

Initiatives currently in place or under development:

- A Healthy Corner was created in the snack shop at 2 N. Meridian and provides many additional healthy options
- Signs indicating healthy choices that can be purchased in the snack bar and nutritional information are available in the Healthy Corner
- Refrigerators and microwaves are provided on each floor at 2 North to allow for proper food storage and preparation so people can bring lunch rather than always going out to eat
- The Farmer's Market is held every Wednesday in the spring and summer months at the City Market and sells a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables
- Access to a scale is available on the second floor in Selig for individuals who would like to weigh themselves on a regular basis
- In conjunction with the Year End Party, the Taste of Wellness was held allowing individuals to bring in healthy food options that others could sample and vote for their favorites

Proposed Initiatives:

- Reinstate the At-work Weight Watchers group that was successful in the past and provide support to the Yo-yo's, a support group of people at ISDH who are on some kind of weight loss plan and meet monthly
- Provide information on local restaurants that provide nutritional information and offer nutritious meals/snacks
- Create a symbol to denote which items in the vending machines are healthy and post them to help those wishing to make healthy snack selections
- Create table tents with tips for a healthy meeting and place them in conference rooms
- Create, distribute, and post fact sheets with ideas on healthy snacks and recipes
- Encourage healthy pitch-ins/celebrations and/or provide suggestions on healthy food items to be included so that everyone can participate in pitch-ins, even if they are trying to follow a healthy diet
- Encourage sharing of the coupons posted in kitchen areas for healthy eating options
- Post healthy choices that can be purchased in the snack bar on the Intranet and include nutritional information
- Emphasize portion control without restricting all foods of minimal nutritional value, and encourage inclusion of healthy options during all occasions when food is available

- Host healthy recipe demonstrations and taste testing at various times throughout the year

5. Mental Health and Social Services

Stress caused from problems at work or personal issues can impact job performance and can even lead to serious health issues like depression. Appropriate coping mechanisms and outlets for stress should be made available and continually marketed to eligible individuals so that these services can be accessed as needed.

Initiatives currently in place or under development:

- The EASY Program (Employee Assistance Services for You) is available to all employees and family members providing counseling and resources on issues such as family problems, child and elder care issues, financial problems, housing concerns, etc., and can help with access to treatment for mental or substance abuse problems
- An Employee Incentive Committee was created and provides opportunities for fun in the workplace and offers encouragement, recognition, and praise to employees and contractors
- Massages were provided by massage therapy students at the 2 North building as a stress reliever and additional massage days will be scheduled in the future
- Individuals on various floors have created opportunities for others to laugh by placing comics or jokes in break areas, on refrigerators, or in stairwells
- Inspirational posters, quotes, and/or poetry are placed throughout the building to inspire and motivate individuals

Proposed Initiatives:

- Provide tip sheets on how to deal with stress at work
- Offer massages by a massage therapist or massage therapy student one day at the 2 North building as a stress reliever
- Assist those with chronic diseases in coping with social and emotional issues resulting from their condition
- Offer suggestions on how to take “mental breaks” throughout the day to get rejuvenated
- Create opportunities to laugh by placing comics or jokes in break areas, on refrigerators, or in stairwells
- Post inspirational posters, quotes, or poetry throughout the building
- Research local salons to find out if discounts on manicures/pedicures/massages could be offered
- Have a member of the EASY Program present at a wellness council meeting or a lunch and learn to discuss all that this program offers

6. Healthy Work Environment

The environment in which we work can affect our physical, emotional, and social well-being. A healthy work environment ensures the safety of all individuals, is aesthetically pleasing, and creates a supportive atmosphere.

Initiatives currently in place or under development:

- ISDH buildings are predominantly non-smoking
- The smoking room at 2 N. Meridian was closed and the non-smoking zone around the building was expanded
- The 2 North building requires security chip access to ensure the safety of everyone in the building
- Refrigerators and microwaves are provided on each floor at 2 North for proper food storage and preparation
- Some power assist doors are available in the 2 North building making for easier navigation for those with disabilities
- Staff pitch-ins and celebrations are held periodically in various programs to acknowledge birthdays, retirements, or other special occasions
- Employees and contractors are allowed to keep personal effects in their cubicles as long as they meet building and safety requirements
- Aluminum can and paper recycling bins are available on each floor at 2 North
- The Green Room was established to recycle gently used office supplies and create a less cluttered work environment.

Proposed Initiatives:

- Remind employees that personal time can be used to participate in wellness activities
- Investigate the possibility of creating “Wellness Time” that could be used to attend health related events/speakers or to participate in physical fitness activities
- Provide tips and instruction on ergonomics
- Post monthly health newsletters on refrigerators
- Enforce no smoking policy in front of the building and post signs stating the policy
- Make ISDH entirely smoke-free
- Encourage stretch breaks at meetings and provide instructions
- Create table tents tips on topics such as healthier pitch-ins and celebrations, alternatives to unhealthy foods, etc., and place them in conference rooms and on table in snack shop
- Provide a container for newspaper recycling
- Place health information sheets on inside of restroom stall doors
- Replace peeling “Wash Hands” signs in restrooms
- Add flowers, basket of toiletries, potpourri, etc., in restrooms to make them more attractive
- Suggest offering mints, sugar free gum, and other “healthier” options in the various “candy bowls” people have throughout the building
- Facilitate a training and create a tip sheet for managers/supervisors to provide guidance on encouraging employees about wellness

- Investigate the possibility of expanding the health spending account to include purchasing fitness equipment and other wellness items

7. Family and Community Involvement

Our families and the communities in which we live make up a large part of who we are. Offering ways to involve family members and promote service to the community can create a positive work environment that acknowledges the whole individual.

Initiatives currently in place or under development:

- Regular blood drives are held allowing employees and contractors to donate blood to be used by local blood banks
- A room is made available on the 8th floor at 2 North for breast pumping to support working mothers who are breastfeeding
- Social activities like ISDH night at an Indians game are organized allowing family members to socialize
- The agency participates in events such as “Bring your child to work day”
- Those with family members serving overseas in the military can post this information on the Intranet and cards or other items from ISDH are sent to the soldiers periodically
- Employees and contractors have participated in Hoosiers Helping Hoosiers, a Governor’s initiative which is a collaborative effort of state agencies committed to feeding Indiana’s hungry through a statewide non-perishable food and toiletry drive
- Employees are given the opportunity to have money deducted from their paychecks to support local charities through the State Employee’s Community Campaign (SECC)

Proposed Initiatives:

- Encourage family members to volunteer at the Black and Minority Health Fair
- Coordinate a community service weekend during which employees, contractors, and their families provide a service to a local nonprofit agency
- Organize a group of employees and contractors who will donate some of their lunch breaks to helping at a local food pantry
- Post opportunities for community service within the agency and acknowledge those who provide their time and talents

8. Marketing, Incentives, and Employee Input

Marketing is the foundation of a successful wellness plan. Individuals must be kept informed and excited about ongoing wellness activities and how the agency supports wellness. A variety of marketing methods must be used to reach as many people as possible and ensure that existing wellness opportunities are made known as well as new initiatives. Tangible and intrinsic rewards and motivation are essential to maintain the momentum of the wellness plan.

Opportunities must be available for individuals outside of those serving on the Wellness Council to provide input on all aspects of the wellness plan.

Initiatives currently in place or under development:

- The ISDH Web site contains a wealth of information on many health issues and the programs of the agency
- The ISDH Intranet has been revised to contain useful information about activities for staff and contractors, and serves to connect employees and contractors working in different program areas
- The ISDH Wellness plan is being posted on the ISDH Intranet site, and shared with other state agencies as a template.
- The Intranet has been used to post surveys to obtain input on various agency projects
- The ISDH newsletter, The Express, contains articles and information on a variety of health topics and programs at the agency
- Email messages to “All ISDH” are used to inform employees and contractors about agency events and issues
- The STAR awards acknowledge employees who provide exemplary service to the agency
- Supervisors may nominate one employee each quarter for the “For the Health of It” recognition, which is intended for employees who have made an outstanding and significant contribution to the betterment of the agency. Recipients receive a personal note and an apple from the Commissioner thanking the employee for their dedication.
- “Healthy Corner” of snack shop in basement of ISDH building established, and is to be “launched” during National Nutrition Month in March 2006.
- Post calendar of wellness activities each month in kitchen areas through the ISDH.
- Wellness Library and Wellness closet both launched and promoted through the use of e-mail messages to staff and contractors.
- ISDH staff and contractors awarded “Wellness Bucks” for participating in wellness activities. Bucks then “spent” on prizes.
- Year-end staff party had contest for ISDH staff and contractors to bring in healthy recipes to be tasted and voted on. Received prizes from Wellness Committee.
- Drawing each month to win healthy lunch with State Health Commissioner if participate in weekly walk.
- Open house at Community Nutrition and Obesity Prevention Program, displays, food drive, and other activities planned to celebrate Nutrition Month at the ISDH.

Proposed Initiatives:

- Develop “Wellness Room” to replace former smoking room at 2 N. Meridian, for use by ISDH staff and contractors.
- Post the wellness plan and information about various wellness initiatives on the Intranet, Web site, and The Express
- Utilize various bulletin boards throughout the building to promote wellness activities as well as refrigerators, stairwells, and restrooms
- Continue to promote wellness initiatives through the Wellness Library
- Allow employees to spend one day of work time doing community service

- Ensure that all wellness activities include an evaluation component
- Create various opportunities for employees and contractors to provide input (electronically and handwritten) on wellness initiatives
- Post survey on ISDH Intranet to determine effectiveness/popularity of wellness activities and Wellness Library.
- Include a Wellness award with the STAR awards program to acknowledge an employee who makes great effort in this area and serves as a role model
- Have council members periodically hand out “Wellness Bucks” to employees making healthy choices
- Gather donations and offer prizes that can be purchased with Wellness Bucks
- Hold a car wash or other “healthy” event to raise money to carry out various activities in the wellness plan
- Encourage employees to visit local farmers’ market and/or garden at home (give away coupons or seeds?)
- Develop “Wellness Corner” of ISDH Intranet, with info on activities, and healthy tips/encouragement for developing healthy behaviors.
- Pick a month to be “Physical Activity Month” and plan activities/challenges for ISDH employees and contractors to do during month.

Conclusion:

This list of current and proposed wellness initiatives is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather a sampling of the many things our agency can and does do to promote wellness. The proposed initiatives will each be examined further by the ISDH Wellness Council and when appropriate, the Health Commissioner, Building Liaisons, Building Owner, and others will be consulted prior to implementation to determine the feasibility of the activity, discuss logistical concerns, and make sure that all existing policies are upheld.

The ISDH Wellness Council will review the Wellness Plan on a yearly basis and will revise it as needed to ensure the plan is kept current and continues to meet the needs of the organization as well as ISDH employees, contractors, student interns, volunteers, and visitors.

Health and wellness is the business of our agency. ISDH consists of many programs and addresses a variety of health needs for Hoosiers all across the state. It is imperative that the agency and those representing the agency continue to strive for higher levels of wellness and serve as a positive role model to other agencies and individuals. Implementing various initiatives proposed in this document can lead the way to a healthier workforce at ISDH and a healthier agency.

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ISDH Wellness Plan